



SONGS OF PRAISE

Singing as an Act of Faith

הלל



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. What song has been a source of comfort for you during these past 18 months? Why?
2. In the series, the musician Shai Tsabari sings “And for just a moment you can see a shore of hope in the distance, the glimmer of a lighthouse.” What brings you hope these days?

By Hadas Wolff Yitzhak

How will we say Hallel this year, when far too many tables are empty and too many hearts are missing loved ones? When too many empty chairs, some still waiting to be sat upon and others that will remain empty forever?

(And who knows? By the time you are reading these lines, maybe our hostages will have been returned to their loved ones; while some have returned, others remain in the dark depths. And I wish, so wish, they have returned already.)

How will we say Hallel when our mouths and hearts are still filled with the taste of the ‘Maror’ (bitter herbs)?

When I examine the verses of Hallel, taken from the book of Psalms, they have become more real and relevant than ever before. It’s hard not to notice that the words “aneni”—answer me—and “hallelujah”—praise God—are used interchangeably in Hallel, the pain and hope intertwined.

I know that these ancient lines were sung during other dark periods of our history and have been read at many seder tables, and maybe that notion should bring us some healing and comfort. I assume that if we were going to create a seder from scratch right now, we would have found it hard to find words of praise. Maybe it’s good that there is a seder already set by our ancestors that will give us a framework to lean on.

Especially this year, when we walk around speechless in the face of an unimaginable reality, we need the familiar words and beloved melodies that have been passed from generation to generation to

anchor us. In the words of Israeli singer Ehud Manor, “this is the song which Saba [grandfather] sang yesterday to Aba [dad] and today I sing it.”

Singing is an essential part of the story we are retelling tonight of a people that came out of Egypt and crossed the sea and were saved from death. Because even then, after this enormous event, instead of talking, Miriam led with singing. When the words are silent and disappearing, the melody comes to help us reach what is beyond the words. And even here, the melody holds within it the ancient pain and hope.

Maybe this year, we will only be able to sing a “cold and broken Hallelujah” as Leonard Cohen sings, but it will express a deep prayer that the day is near when we will once more celebrate and rejoice.

Amen.

In “*Song of Hope*,” Beit Avi Chai’s new online [series](#), we invite Israeli composers and musicians to share songs that became their soundtrack and provide them with inspiration during these difficult days of war and trauma.

Each episode includes an acoustic performance and an intimate discussion about the comfort and hope that music can offer.



Beit Avi Chai focuses on creating, developing and producing original Jewish content with the aim of introducing wide and diverse audiences to Jewish-Israeli culture and ideas in Israel and around the world—and engaging reached audiences to actively take part in Jewish/Israeli cultural study and activity.